

Study Guide for the Central Church of Christ 3-18-18

March 18 we will study John 1:35-51. Discussion questions are:

1. At what point in your life did you most struggle with the question, “Will I live for myself or will I serve a higher cause?”
 - a. What helped you resolve the question?
2. What is the correlation between “discipleship” and “discipline”?
 - a. What disciplines have helped you grow in your discipleship?
 - b. Is accountability to a spiritual partner helpful to you in discipleship?
3. What do you think Jesus meant by, “*Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests but the son of man has no place to lay his head.*”?
4. What would be some characteristics of a person who just “hangs around” Jesus rather than actually following him?
5. At your most immature moment which of the following best describes why you used to just “hang around” Jesus”
 - a. Some people like crowds.
 - b. Some people are looking for a miracle.
 - c. Some people just like to be right.
 - d. Some people are plagued by guilt.
6. What synonyms can you think of for “Come follow me.”?
7. Why did the disciples ask Jesus where he lived?
8. Would you be hesitant to claim being totally committed to Jesus? If so, why?
9. Do you feel like Jesus has called you to adventure? If so, describe the adventure.

Sermon: *The Meaning of Discipleship*

Several years ago a controversial movie about the life of Christ was made. It was called “The Last Temptation of Christ.” One observant columnist reviewing the movie observed, “I found a “Me Generation” portrait of a savior you can relate to – Jesus, the great neurotic.” He went on to say, “The movie says righteousness lies merely in a series of inner struggles not in the accomplishment of God’s will.” Then he said, “Up until 40 or 50 years ago the main question in every human life was, “Will I have what it takes to do right? Will I take my safety and my happiness and submit that to something higher? Will I be willing to suffer for these things? Will I be willing to die for these things? That’s courage and that’s integrity.” Then the columnist said, “That’s changed. For the first time in history the purpose of being a human is to find out what your desires are and to go and fulfill them. Real courage today means the courage to be yourself. So this film depicts Jesus as this modern human who only struggles with the question, ‘Who am I?’” Contrary to the message of that movie the greatest temptation you will ever face will come when you decide to answer the question, “Will I live for myself or will I serve a higher cause?”

What we want to see in the text today is a thing called discipleship. Do you hear the root word, “discipline” in discipleship? Discipline means to subjugate our present desires for the sake of a future, higher, nobler cause. A disciple of Christ is a person who says all other pursuits are

secondary to serving and learning about his Master, Jesus Christ. If you think it is more important to find out who you are and to fulfill your desires than to obey a higher calling then you will never find out who you are and you will never have your desires fulfilled.

What does it mean to be a disciple? The answer to that question is the answer to the purpose of your life. As we look at discipleship in the text today we want to notice 3 things: He calls us. He calls us to follow. He calls us to adventure.

HE CALLS US

In vs. 43 Jesus comes to Phillip and says, “*Follow me.*” In vs. 37 he calls 2 disciples. One is Andrew and the other probably is John, although he doesn’t name himself. Jesus already knew them and had some association with them but it is not until this point he says to them, “Come!” That’s still the way he operates. People start by kind of just hanging around Jesus. Then at some dramatic moment, maybe when they least expect it, they hear him say, “*Come, follow me.*”

Jesus isn’t looking for a big church full of adherents. In Luke 9 a guy comes to him and volunteers to join up. Jesus says, “*Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests but the son of man has no place to lay his head.*” It’s like he was saying, “Do you know what you are doing? This is a tough life.” That’s not a very good recruiting technique! Why does he do that? Because Jesus doesn’t want people who like him, he wants disciples. He doesn’t want people who just believe in him, he wants followers. For the rest of this sermon I want you to consider one possibility. Could it be that you are someone who just hangs around Jesus? Could it be that you like Jesus and are a fan of Jesus? Could it be that you are an interested observer but have never become a disciple? There are lots of reasons people hang around Jesus without becoming his disciple. One reason is some people like crowds. They just like to be where the action is. There’s always action around Jesus. Other people hang around Jesus because of the miracles. There is something missing in their lives, some goal that they have yet to reach and maybe, just maybe Jesus will help them get there. If you want to see folks like that tune in to most of the popular TV evangelists and listen to the message. Notice what gets the audience excited and moving. Other folks hang around Jesus because they like to be right. They want to get enough of his teaching to be able to correct others who have the wrong views. They like to feel superior. They like to say, “We know and you don’t.” Others hang around Jesus because they are guilty. They may have been told they don’t need to feel guilty but they continue to and somehow hanging around Jesus makes them forget their guilt for a little while, but it comes back. Jesus says those reasons are not good enough. He says, “I don’t want curiosity seekers or blessing seekers or miracle seekers. I want disciples!” So he calls us. What does he call us to do?

HE CALLS US TO FOLLOW

When he calls us to follow he means “Make me your highest priority.” To follow somebody means you have to leave somewhere. If you want to know if you are really following Jesus ask yourself, “What have I left?” A follower of Jesus has left some kind of thinking in order to follow. A follower of Jesus has left some attitude about family in order to follow. A follower of Jesus has left some attitude about work in order to follow. One who follows Jesus pulls everything through the knothole of “Would Jesus approve of this?” Jesus becomes the center of

gravity for you. Astronauts know what it is like to live without a center of gravity - everything just sort of floats around. Down here if you put a screwdriver on a screw and twist it, the screw turns. Up there if you put a screwdriver on a screw and twist it, you turn. We don't know what to do without a center of gravity in our lives. I don't know of a better illustration of lostness than that. To be lost is to float around in life with no idea what your attitudes and behaviors will lead to. Lost people are disoriented, not knowing which way is up and which way is down. They have no idea where to find happiness or peace or hope for the future. The answer to that lifestyle of not knowing which end is up is to follow Jesus. Jesus gives direction and purpose and meaning to life. No wonder he claimed to be "*the way, the truth, the life.*" No wonder John describes him as "*the light of the world.*"

To be a follower of Jesus means to make him your highest priority. It also means to give him absolute obedience. Why do you think they asked Jesus, "*Where do you live?*" It wasn't idle curiosity. It was because they understood they were going to be with him virtually around the clock. They understood discipleship to mean absolute obedience. And that's where the rub comes for us. Modern people hate the idea of absolute obedience and absolute authority. We identify with the cow who was approached by a chicken to put in a steak and egg restaurant. The cow objected because for the chicken it meant a donation. For the cow it meant total commitment. We are afraid of total commitment to anything. Here's a question for you. Do you want to know where Jesus lives? Do you want to move in with him and serve him round the clock? Far too many people want Jesus to be "on call" for them. They will call him when they need him. And Jesus absolutely refuses to do that. He didn't say, "*Call me.*" He said, "*Follow me.*" Let me make this very personal and very specific for you. Jesus says, "Sex outside of marriage is wrong. You cannot do it." Do you say, "Well, thanks for the suggestion, Jesus. I'll take it under advisement." Or do you say, "Yes, Lord.?" Followers of Jesus say, "I will submit all of my mind, all of my heart, all of my behavior, completely to you." So the question is, "Are you a follower of Jesus?" I know that's a scary proposition because you wonder, "What if he asks me to do something I don't want to do?" Before you decide listen to the last characteristic of following Jesus.

HE CALLS US TO ADVENTURE

He doesn't just say, "Come." What does he say in verse 39? "*Come and see!*" The only relationship we have in our culture that comes close to that of a disciple to a Master is that of an athlete to a coach. Can you imagine an athlete who is about to sign with a major university meeting with the coach and saying, "Coach before I sign this I want you to know that I don't want you to ask me to do anything that is hard. I don't want you to ask me to do anything I don't want to do. I'm afraid you are going to ask me to do things that make me uncomfortable." Any coach is going to say, "Well I am most certainly going to make those kinds of demands of you. If you want to become a great athlete you will have to do everything I say. There will be times you say to yourself, 'I can't do one more lap.', but if you listen to me I will make you into the athlete you've dreamed of becoming." Of course Jesus is going to ask you to do things you don't want to do. But here is the good news - when you commit yourself to Jesus there is fresh air that fills your lungs and gives you a new energy for life you never knew before. God created you to breathe best, to function best, to live best in Christ.

Nathaniel must have been doing something significant under that fig tree because he is totally impressed that Jesus saw him there doing whatever it was he was doing. For Jesus to see him there, in that environment, drew Nathaniel to commit his life totally to him. And listen to the adventure Jesus promises him. *“You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that....you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”* Was he not saying, *“You have no idea what you are going to see when you commit to follow me. Come and see.”*?

Some of you are here just to hang around Jesus. Some of you are here out of guilt. Others of you are here out of curiosity. Yet others are here hoping for a miracle. But you are just hanging around. Jesus says to you, “Don’t do that. Don’t have a token relationship with me. If you will give me everything you are, I’ll give you everything I am.” Have you ever had a chance to get in on an adventure like that? Come and see.